In his otherwise darkly ominous warning, Sparling exclaimed: “[T]here is a danger and it is national! Either we must educate and elevate the incoming multitudes or they will drag us and our children down to a lower level.” He made it clear which aliens posed the biggest threat to progress: “We must see to it that the civilization and ideals of South Eastern Europe are not transplanted to and perpetuated on our virgin soil.”

Sparling concluded his fearmongering, warning knell about dangerous aliens by saying: “I fear that the Canadian churches have not yet been seized of the magnitude and import of this ever-growing problem.” Having the principal of Wesley College ring out religious alarm bells from the ivory tower of Canada’s Social Gospel movement was like shouting “Reds!” in a crowded church.

But Sparling was not all doom and gloom. His panicstricken entreaty to Woodsworth’s textbook warned that “read and ponder” its subject matter. “I can with confidence commend this primer to our young people—persons of her character to sow reds!” in a crowded church.

Although Sparling did not describe Ashdown’s “solution” to the immigration problem, he must have known that the millionaire mayor was rabidly averse to political radicals. This was public knowledge. Ashdown’s “solution” included barring outspoken undesirables. In April 1908, just two months before Woodsworth wrote the preface to his book, Ashdown—the acclaimed “Merchant Prince of Winnipeg”—tried to stop “Red Emma” Goldman from speaking in their city. Born to a Jewish family in Russia, Goldman was a prolific US writer, lecturer and activist. She was also a philosopher, feminist, anarchist, unionist, atheist and an advocate for peace, civil rights, free speech and birth control.

Goldman had already visited Winnipeg twice. Her 1907 lectures included “The Curse of Religion” and “Trades Unionism and the General Strike.” Wanting to abort a repeat performance, Ashdown wrote to Liberal Interior Minister Frank Oliver. (See below.) Ashdown explained: “we have a very large foreign population in this City, it consists approximately of 15,000 Galicians, 11,000 Germans, 10,000 Jews, 2,000 Hungarians and 5,000 Russians and other Slavs and Bohemians. Many...have had trouble in their own country with their Governments and come to the new land to get away from it but have all the undesirable elements in their character that created the trouble for them before. They are just the right crowd for Emma Goldman or persons of her character to sow from Canada to repair this injustice.”

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